



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

In treating of elections and voting in the United States the authors have deviated from their general plan, and have entered the field of politics—not, however, partizan politics. They take pains, for example, to give what seem to them to be reasons for regarding the direct primary as a great improvement on the convention, not only in theory but in result, on which there is room for wide divergence of opinion. Their argument includes a fancy sketch of the proceedings of a nominating convention absolutely dominated by a boss. No doubt there were many such conventions, but they were not typical of all, and the generalization is misleading. Moreover there are serious defects in the present primary system that are not mentioned. Under it many a weak or objectionable candidate has slipped through by a narrow plurality, when there were many competitors for the nomination, who would have been eliminated after the first ballot in a convention requiring a majority to effect a nomination.

In one or two other passages the authors have introduced their personal opinions on controverted points in American practice, which seem out of place in a work which is otherwise one of information and not of political propaganda. There is a statement on page 286, volume I., about a former mayor of Boston that should be amended. Between the offense and its punishment and his election as mayor there was a long interval during which he was both an alderman and a congressman.

EDWARD STANWOOD.

*Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law.* In three volumes. By Sir JAMES GEORGE FRAZER, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. (New York and London: Macmillan Company. 1918. Pp. xxv, 569; xxi, 571; xviii, 566. \$15.00.)

SOME one said of the great Arabic scholar, the late Professor De Goeje of Leyden, that he published as much as an entire academy. Sir James George Frazer's productivity is even more remarkable, and it might be said that he has written an entire library. His *magnum opus*, *The Golden Bough*, growing from two volumes in the first edition to twelve volumes in the third with an additional index volume, is the most extensive collection of illustrations of popular customs, beliefs, and rites in all parts of the world, primitive, ancient, and modern, that has ever been gathered together by any scholar or by any group of scholars. The book marked a new era in the comparative study of religious beliefs and practices. The production of such a work alone would have consumed the entire career of an ordinary scholar; but Sir James Frazer is of the extraordinary type, and so we have in addition from his pen a four-volume work on totemism and exogamy, a six-volume edition of Pausanias with elaborate and most constructive notes, a volume on *The Early History of Kingship*, another on *The Belief in Immortality*

(with a second still to come), besides minor writings which in the case of an ordinary scholar would be classified as major. Mr. Frazer now sets before us a most elaborate investigation on folk-lore in the Old Testament, in three large volumes, which will take its place as an indispensable reference-work on the table of every student of the Bible. The work, however, makes a still wider appeal, and, being written with Sir James's charm of style, should attract the attention of all intelligent readers whose tastes pass beyond the popular novel and the literary essay. The three volumes also contain much material of value to the general student of history and more particularly to the one interested in the unfolding of custom into law and of that somewhat indefinite field which the Germans call *Kulturgeschichte*.

That the Old Testament is full of folk-lore has, of course, been recognized for a long while by scholars, and some of the material found in the book of Genesis and in some books of a more historical character like Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, in which historical or quasi-historical traditions are blended with legend and popular fancies, has at various times engaged the attention of students, among whom should be mentioned the late Joseph Jacobs who was one of the pioneers in the study of folk-lore in the Old Testament. No one, however, has hitherto attempted to cover the entire large field. This was left to Frazer, who indeed, it may be added, without disparagement to others, is the only scholar living who could have attempted such a Herculean task. Even as it is there are some omissions; as for example, there is no investigation of the rite of the "red heifer" (in Numbers xix.) nor of the "burning bush" (in the book of Exodus), while of the various incidents in the legend of Samson only one is treated. The field is in fact inexhaustible.

The author arranges his material in four parts: (1) The Early Ages of the World, devoted in large part to the Biblical flood story, but including also the creation tale, the story of the fall, the mark of Cain, and the tower of Babel; (2) the Patriarchal Age, dealing with the covenant with Abraham, and for the larger part taken up with elaborate investigation of ultimogeniture throughout the primitive and ancient world; (3) the Time of the Judges and Kings, dealing with miscellaneous aspects of folk-lore, such as sacred trees, high places, and the significance of the threshold; (4) the Law, marked by a most suggestive and impressive investigation on the place of the law in Jewish history and followed by specific laws containing folk-lore elements, as the prohibition against seething a kid in its mother's milk, the custom of boring a servant's ear, cuttings for the dead, the ordeal, the ox-goring, and the golden bells.

It is difficult in such a mass of material to make a selection as an illustration of Sir James Frazer's method of investigation, which may be briefly defined as a picturesque and lucid summary of the Old Testament passages furnishing the particular custom or rite to be investigated,

followed by a mass of illustrations of similar rites and customs from all parts of the world, after which, on the basis of this illustrative material, a conclusion as to the significance of the rite or custom is set forth. One's judgment, therefore, in regard to the value of Frazer's work depends upon one's attitude towards his method. In some cases it may seem that the analogies brought forward by him are somewhat far-fetched, but in most cases it is just the enormous heaping of illustrations that strengthens our confidence in his conclusions. So, for example, in one of the most valuable chapters of the work, is taken up the curious rite of seething the kid in its mother's milk. It is perfectly clear, after sifting the overwhelming evidence brought before us of the curious belief among primitive peoples that whatever is done to the milk also affects the cow from which it is drawn, that the prohibition rests on the fear lest the boiling of the milk may in some way affect the udder of the cow. Strange as this may seem at first sight, one's skepticism diminishes with each succeeding page as one scans the accumulated evidence of the many peculiar precautions taken in regard to milk among pastoral peoples throughout the world, ranging from prohibition among some against boiling milk at all, to special regulations affecting those to whom the task of milking and attending to the cows was delegated.

Students of the early history of law will be particularly interested in the most complete collection for traces of ultimogeniture that has yet been made and which covers a greater part of the second volume. Sir James shows conclusively that most of the marriage regulations among primitive and ancient peoples rest ultimately upon economic conditions which in most cases brought it about that the older sons separated more or less definitely from close relations with the father and that the younger sons were thus in a position in which they would be more likely to benefit by the advantages of inheritance. The ramifications produced by such economic conditions are endless, and while some of the conclusions reached by the author, as, for example, what he says in connection with what he calls the "sororate" (to designate marriages with the wife's sister in the lifetime of the first wife or after her death), may be open to the objection that our author fails to take into account other conditions that might have produced the same result, yet on the whole this investigation of the entire basis upon which marriage regulations between relatives rests represents such a striking advance on previous attempts that we ought not to cavil at deficiencies in the argument here and there. A point of special importance is the proof furnished by the author that the current view of the origin of *jus primae noctis*, which assumes that this gave the right to the lord of the tenant over the female dependents about to enter the marriage state, is entirely incorrect. It was not the lord of the tenant who enjoyed the privilege of the first night, but the husband who bought that *jus* or right from the lord as a device to prevent the demons from interfering with the enjoyment of the young couple. Here again one must read consecutively the

evidence from many quarters, which Frazer produces, to show the precautions that a young married couple had to exercise, sometimes for days, sometimes for weeks and even months, before they could cohabit without danger of an attack from the demons.

Naturally, not all parts of the voluminous work have the same interest of novelty. So, for example, Sir James has comparatively little that is new to say in regard to the creation story, and in fact it is a little disappointing to find him contenting himself with giving parallels to certain portions of the tale without entering into the larger question of the manner and conditions under which the remarkable story—especially the Jahwistic account in Genesis ii.—took final shape. A similar criticism might be passed on the investigation of the flood story which is valuable chiefly for the immense collection of flood stories from all parts of the world, brought together with an expenditure of enormous labor and patience, and which is in itself an exhaustive treatise on the subject. Interested in the collection of flood stories, Frazer pays comparatively little attention to the *details* of the Biblical tale, which from the point of view of folk-lore are really more interesting than the tale as a whole. A striking feature of many of the tales in the early chapters of Genesis, which ought not to be overlooked in an investigation, is the combination of pure folk-tales showing traces of very primitive ideas with remarkably advanced and on the whole rather pessimistic speculations regarding the nature and ambitions of man.

Sir James Frazer writes evidently *con amore*. He is always absorbed by his topic, whether it is a description of the evolution of law among the Hebrews—one of the most eloquent sections of the book—or an account of oaks and terebinths of Palestine. Writing, for him, must be a pleasure, or he could not have the patience to give us so many striking descriptions of scenery of Greece, Palestine, and other countries incidental to his subject. His charming style and the heights of eloquence which he so often reaches add largely to the fascination of his work. Indeed, without his pleasing and graceful manner of presenting the topic, the ordinary reader would grow weary of wading through pages upon pages of illustrative material. Under his deft pen, even repetitions are free from dullness. Gifted also with a keen sense of humor, our author does not hesitate to deviate occasionally from his subject in order to introduce a story that is amusing as well as a folk-tale, and his little gentle knocks at some of the opponents of critical study of the Bible are all the more effective because of their half-concealed satirical implications. Sometimes, to be sure, his love of Biblical tales, many of which are of such irresistible charm, prompts him to tell them in a manner which might convey to the ordinary reader the impression that he is accepting Biblical tradition at its face value. So, for example, he conjures up pictures of domestic scenes in Jacob's family which might, if one encountered them in a Sunday-school book, provoke a smile. As a literary artist of high calibre, it is perhaps natural, under

the circumstances, that Sir James Frazer occasionally succumbs to the temptation of giving us an interesting picture, even at the risk of creating an erroneous impression in the minds of readers who do not know how sharp his critical acumen is when he chooses to exercise it.

Taken as a whole, Sir James Frazer's latest work is to be put down as one of the most important contributions made in the field of Biblical studies. The work will prove a stimulus for further investigations, and it will retain its position for all times as the most comprehensive and most authoritative collection of material bearing on the folk-lore of the Old Testament. Supplements to the work will no doubt be made to it from time to time by others—we hope by Sir James himself—but the world will probably never produce another Frazer, able to cover the entire vast field, with the sure touch of the master throughout.

MORRIS JASTROW, JR.

#### BOOKS OF MEDIEVAL AND MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY

*The Gothic History of Jordanes.* In English Version with an Introduction and a Commentary by CHARLES CHRISTOPHER MIEROW, Ph.D. (Princeton: Princeton University Press; London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 1915. Pp. 188. \$1.75.)

THE work of which the present is an inexcusably belated review concerns the historical student because it offers an English version of an historical source not previously translated, except in the form of a thesis by the same writer presented for the doctorate at Princeton in 1908. The present work is a revision of that translation, omitting the Latin text, and fortified with an historical introduction and a commentary.

The work issues, therefore, from the classical rather than from the historical graduate seminary. In its present form, however, it appears to be addressed chiefly to the historical student. The introduction of fifty pages is devoted to matters bearing on the value of the text as an historical source: the qualifications of its author, the conditions under which he wrote, the sources which he may have used, together with a chronological table, and a genealogy of the Gothic kings of the Amal stem; while only two pages are given to the Latinity of the author. Similarly the forty-five pages of commentary contain chiefly identifications of the passages in the authorities cited by Jordanes and explanations of geographical allusions in terms of modern geography; it is burdened very little with textual or other strictly linguistic elucidations.

The volume belongs, therefore, to that still scanty and slowly increasing body of medieval historical sources rendered into English. This material is of very real and practical value for the historical profession, since it offers an opportunity to give a first-hand impression of the Middle Ages to historical and other students who are not primarily